The Middlebury Campus

Since 1905

Vol. CXIX, No. 12 | January 28, 2021 | middleburycampus.com

Middlebury Schools Abroad project $3.5–3.7 million deficit

By ABIGAIL CHANG & SOPHIA MCDERMOTT-HUGHES
News Editors

The college canceled its spring abroad program in Japan on Friday, marking the last of the 16 schools abroad to make the decision to close. While the schools typically generate over a million dollars in surplus, the college is projecting a $3.5–3.7 million dollar net loss from the schools abroad alone in the Fiscal Year 2021. This loss comprises more than one-third of the latest $10.2 million deficit projection, according to Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration David Provost.

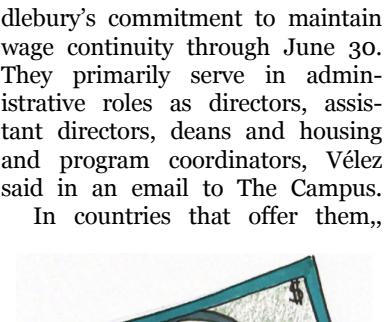
In pre-pandemic years, the Middlebury schools abroad program has typically enrolled 700 students annually, accounting for $10–12 million in tuition revenue. Operating costs have amounted to about $9.5–10 million each year, and the collective Middlebury schools abroad have routinely generated an annual surplus of $1 million, according to Dean of International Programs Carlos Vélez.

Though the schools abroad are closed for in-person instruction, Provost estimates that they will generate roughly $1 million in total revenue through FY2021 in tuition from online classes and internships offered through the schools.

While not having to host students cut operating costs in half, Middlebury's commitment to wage continuity for all of its employees means the college will still spend an estimated $5.2 million on schools abroad in FY2021, according to Provost.

Middlebury schools abroad directly employs 47 full-time staff members across its 16 schools, all of whom are included under Middlebury's commitment to maintain wage continuity through June 30. They primarily serve in administrative roles as directors, assistant directors, deans and housing and program coordinators, Vélez said in an email to The Campus.

In countries that offer them,,



SARAH FAGAN

the schools have availed themselves of government-subsidized furlough programs to cut costs while still maintaining wage continuity, according to Provost.

The rest of the schools abroad staff are primarily contracted on a short-term basis according to program enrollment. These positions, which include course instructors, orientation assistants and program tutors, among others, do not fall under the umbrella of the college's wage continuity pledge. As a result, schools have been able to cut costs by not hiring anyone to fill those positions, according to Vélez.

The remaining skeleton staff of the schools continue to work hard despite closures. Staff spent much of the fall semester trying to plan and make possible school reopenings in the spring. Middlebury had hoped to run at least 75% of the programs but ultimately decided to keep them shuttered. The staff will resume planning in anticipation of restarting their programs in the fall of 2021.

In the meantime, several schools are offering online classes, including

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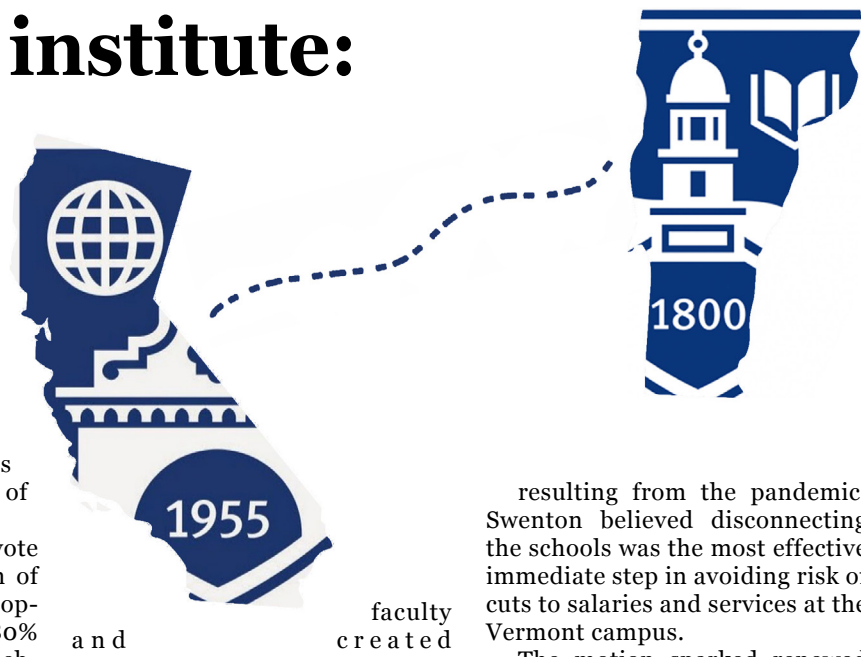
The college and the institute:

A look inside Middlebury's complicated relationship with Monterey



By RILEY BOARD & JAKE GAUGHAN
Managing Editor & News Editor

Nonproliferation, economic diplomacy and localization management are terms seldomly heard on the college's Vermont campus.

But 2,500 miles away on the coast of California, more than 600 graduate students and hundreds of faculty and staff research these very topics at the Middlebury Institute for International Studies (MIIS), an establishment as deeply institutionally intertwined with the college as its Schools Abroad or Bread Loaf School of English.

In 2005, Middlebury College's then-President Ronald Liebowitz floated the idea of affiliating the college with the Monterey Institute, as it was known at the time. The institute was a graduate school founded in 1955 with a focus on foreign languages that evolved to include programs in areas like international policy, translation studies and terrorism studies. In 2003, it was placed on probation by its accreditation institute because of a pattern of operating deficits.

A 2005 Faculty Council vote about the possible acquisition of the institute overwhelmingly opposed the idea, with nearly 80% voting against acquisition. Liebowitz and the Board of Trustees pursued an affiliation anyway, at which point the college absorbed the institute's debts and assets. Five years later — in 2010 — the college officially acquired MIIS, and by 2015, the school was renamed The Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey.

Over the last 15 years, administrators have made extensive efforts to bring the two institutions closer together. They've created funds to encourage inter-campus interaction, promoted collaboration between faculty and created opportunities for undergraduates to study away at MIIS. However, relations between MIIS and the college remain disjointed, partially as a result of their separate histories but manifesting more recently in financial concerns.

In April 2020, as the Covid-19 pandemic intensified, Middlebury's faculty gathered to vote on the Sense of the Faculty Motion submitted by college Professor of Mathematics Frank Swenton recommending detaching MIIS from the college. The motion was spurred by fears of impending financial challenges resulting from the pandemic. Swenton believed disconnecting the schools was the most effective immediate step in avoiding risk of cuts to salaries and services at the Vermont campus.

The motion sparked renewed debate in both Vermont and California about the place of MIIS in the college's mission.

At the time that Swenton's Faculty Motion was introduced, the full economic effects of the pandemic were still unknown. Fears of layoffs and pay cuts circulated among faculty and staff, and the college's refunding of room and board only increased anxieties. After three years of painful "workforce planning" and austeri-

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VAN BARTH/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Many members of the college's dining staff have temporarily joined the custodial team, though some are now working at the Snow Bowl or Bread Loaf.

Staff undergo temporary reshuffling while students are away

By KATIE FUTTERMAN
Contributing Writer

When the majority of students left Middlebury for winter break, leaving just 23 students on campus for the dining halls to feed in December, dining hall staffers were left with little work. As a solution, the college offered these staffers the option to temporarily work in other departments, which allowed them to avoid using up their Combined Time Off (CTO) during the break.

Staff members accumulate CTO the longer they work at Middlebury, and it can be used for vacation time or sick leave. Those who did not opt for positions in other departments will be required to use CTO to account for the time off.

Dining staff are currently helping across a range of departments, including Grounds and Custodial as well as at the Snow Bowl and Bread Loaf. There is also a "skeletal crew" working at Ross to feed the small number of students currently living on campus.

Coordinating requested time off and scheduling new positions for 100 dining staffers was no easy feat. According to Dan Detora, director of dining services, staff were given the choice of where they would like to work, and Middlebury made efforts to put them in their preferred spot.

Patti McCaffrey, a chef in Atwater, has worked in the kitchens of Middlebury for 22 years. After similar reshufflings last year, she had worked in the athletic center during the summer and was happy to return there for winter break.

The majority of the dining staff went to custodial services. The custodial team typically employs about 85 staffers, but this year it was down to about 65 during the fall semester after a hiring freeze that has been in place since last spring. The team has temporarily increased nearly twofold this winter with the addition of dining staff.

The custodial staff usually cleans small houses and suites during the semester but did not do so this year due to their reduced numbers and the health risks presented by Covid-19. Now that most students are away from campus, staff has been busy cleaning these houses and suites and moving the belongings of students assigned to new rooms for the spring. As things have slowed down, the college wants employees who accumulated more than 80 hours of CTO by November 29, 2020 to take time off. This is to reduce the likelihood of staff taking such breaks in June and July instead, when the college anticipates there will be a lot more work to be done.

Dan Celik is one of the custodial supervisors who has integrated teams of dining staff into facilities work. He also teaches an introductory course on cleaning, including safety aspects, PPE, chemicals to use and ergonomics to prevent injury. He has been busy teaching these classes to the dining

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LOCAL

Ripton votes to leave Addison school district

By JULIA PEPPER & ARIADNE WILL
Contributing Writer & Local Editor

Ripton voted on Jan. 12 to leave the Addison Central School District (ACSD) in an effort to keep its elementary school open amid declining enrollment, budget cuts and potential school consolidation. The town of Weybridge voted to stay.

Vermont schools have faced funding challenges in recent years due to the aging and decreasing population of the state. To combat ongoing demographic and funding shifts, ACSD is considering closing schools in Bridgeport, Ripton and Weybridge. The closures are meant to streamline the ACSD and eliminate the cost of maintaining additional staff and infrastructure. But in order for Ripton to leave ACSD, the other six towns in the district must vote to allow Ripton to leave. The bid will then move to the Vermont Board of Education, which will ultimately decide if Ripton can become independent.

Ripton mother Erin Lacey Robinson is leading Ripton's effort to secede from ACSD. Robinson says she does not believe that closing Ripton Elementary School is a long-term solution to the budget problems that ACSD has cited as reason for consolidation. Her sentiment has been echoed by others parents in the town and across the state.

"The problems that our schools are facing across the state are not an individual school's problems," Robinson said. "It's not all about declining enrollment."

But it is, in part, about declining enrollment: Vermont's schools are funded by property taxes from across the state, meaning that taxpayers from the Northeast Kingdom to Bennington are paying to keep schools open in places like Ripton. With so few students, the tiny elementary schools require higher overhead costs in comparison to larger schools with lower teacher-to-student ratios.

Robinson believes teacher and staff healthcare costs are the biggest drains on funding, but did not indicate other potential avenues for funding benefits for

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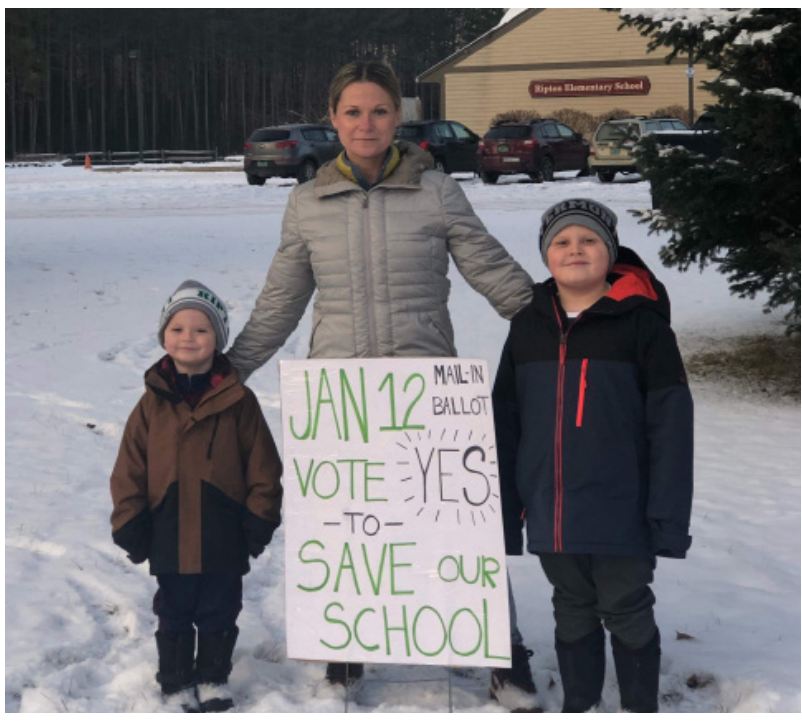

COURTESY PHOTO

Erin Lacey Robinson led the charge to prevent Ripton Elementary School from closing or being repurposed due to school consolidation efforts.

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Capitol riots leave D.C.-based students reeling
By MAGGIE REYNOLDS

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